

THE MOSHOPOLIS SILVERSMITH GEORGIJE ARGIRI

The artists of Moshopolis stamped an indelible seal in the development of 18th century Orthodox art which evolved under the aegis of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci in the Hapsburg monarchy. To date researchers have mainly focused their attention on painters and graphic artists. The silversmiths from Moshopolis also gave a significant contribution to the development of the arts in the areas of the Karlovci Metropolitanate. However, their activity has been largely uninvestigated.

The silversmiths of Moshopolis appeared in the towns of the Hapsburg monarchy already in the first decades following their liberation from the Turks. Thus, the population census in Timisoara of January 28, 1739 mentioned the name of the silversmith Todor Mihail, who had come from Moshopolis in the year 1731¹. The presence of silversmiths was registered in other cities as well, and one of the most important centres was inter alia Novi Sad². In the beginning of 1770's seven silversmiths of the Orthodox faith were working in Novi Sad. Only one of them, Đordje Tadijanović, had come from Osjek in Slavonija, while all the rest had come from Macedonia. Đordje Nikolić became a citizen of Novi Sad on August 29, 1770, Lazar Kostić and Slavoj Demeter on September 13, 1770, Marko Stafanović on March 27, 1771 and Mihajlo Anastasijević on September 7, 1771. Regarding all of them, it was recorded that they had come «ex Macedonia»³. A more specific place of origin is referred only in the case of the silversmith named Markus Stamu, who became a citizen of Novi Sad on August 18, 1773. The records say that he was «ex Turcia, loco Grabovo»⁴. According to other, insufficiently verified sources, the number of silversmiths working in Novi Sad at the time was considerably larger. In the course of 1770 there were eighteen silversmiths working in this town, three Serbs and fifteen Tzintzars (Vlachs, Welachians). Five years later, according to the same source there were thirty one silversmiths working in the town, most of them Tzitzars⁵. By the

1. D. J. Popović, *Srbi u Banatu do kraja osamanaestog veka*, Beograd 1955, p. 387.

2. D. J. Popović, *O Cincarima, prilozi pitanju postanka našeg građanskog društva*, Beograd 1937, pp. 140-141.

3. I. Bah, «Prilog historiji zlatarstva u Vojvodini», *Rad vojvodanskih muzeja* 6 (1957) 240.

4. *Op.cit.*

5. D. J. Popović, *O Cincarima*, p. 141; Ž. Sečanski, *Popisi stanovništva Bačke tokom XVIII veka*, Beograd 1952, pp. 300-311.

year 1797, two decades later, they had established their independent silversmiths' guild and obtained their seal⁶. The appearance of larger number of silversmiths from Macedonia precisely in the early 1770's is probably associated with the first destruction of Moshopolis in 1769, when due to the general insecurity a large number of Greek and Tzintzar merchants and craftsmen moved out and settled in cities of the Hapsburg monarchy.

The work of Orthodox silversmiths, who previously obtained workshops in Novi Sad, has remained for the most part unexplored. Archival records tell us that the reliquary for the relics of St. Stefan Štiljanović in the Šišatovac monastery on mountain Fruška Gora was made by the Novi Sad silversmiths Nikola Tomašević and Marinko Cvejić in 1760⁷. No other date on the work of these silversmiths is available. Novi Sad, however, was an important centre of the gold trade in the first half of the 18th century as well, when the fruitful and renowned master craftsmen Georgije Argiri from Moshopolis also worked in this town.

One of the first works signed by Georgije Argiri is the liturgical fan of the Krušedol monastery in Fruška Gora⁸. The liturgical fan is made of partly gilded silver. In the centre of both sides is the waist image of Christ Immanuel blessing with his hands raised. Around him is a circular riband with a text of the song of the seraphim inscribed in it, in Greek on one side and in Serbo-Slavic on the other. Beneath the Slavic text there is an inscription stating that the fan had been commissioned by the bishop of Pečuj Nikanor Meletijević in 1724, and that it was made by «Georgije Argiri, silversmith from Moshopolis». Around the medallions with the image of Christ, on both sides are fixed cast seraphimes holding liturgical fans in their hands. Three rectangular cast icons are riveted between them on each side. They depict on one side the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist. The church of the Krušedol monastery is dedicated to the Annunciation, which is why this scene was singled out and placed above the image of Christ Immanuel. The Annunciation also figures in an earlier liturgical fan, commissioned for the Krušedol monastery by the metropolitan of Belgrade Ilarion in 1664⁹. The icons of Theotokos and St. John the Baptist are placed next to that of Christ, forming together the Deisis. The postures of the Theotokos and St. John the Baptist demonstrate that the silversmith and the commissioner of the work both had in mind the idea of their supplicatory mediation. This time also the model they emulated was the earlier liturgical fan of the metropolitan Ilarion. The icons on the other side of the fan show the images of the holy despots of the Branković family, whose relics were kept at Krušedol monastery. On one icon is depicted bishop Maksim Branković, in archpriest robes holding a Bible in his hand. On

6. D. J. Popović, *op.cit.*; I. Bah, *op.cit.*, p. 243.

7. I. Bah, *op.cit.*, p. 240; P. Štraser, «Ktitori i priložnici manastira Šišatovca u XVIII veku», *Manastir Šišatovac*, Zbornik radova, Beograd 1989, p. 380.

8. Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi*, Beograd 1903, p. 63, No. 2430; L. Mirković, *Starine fruškogorskih manastira*, Beograd 1931, pp. 37-38, Table XL.

9. L. Mirković, *op.cit.*, p. 35, Table XXXVII; B. Radojković, *Srpsko zlatarstvo XVI i XVII veka*, Novi Sad 1966, pp. 150-151.

the second one despot Stefan Branković is depicted holding a cross. On the second one despot Stefan Branković is depicted. On the third are the despot's wife Angelina and despot Jovan are also depicted. The presentation of the images of the holy despots of the Branković family on liturgical objects was a practice that can be followed in the Krušedol monastery ever since its founding in the 16th century. At the request of bishop Meletijević, who lived in Krušedol and was well acquainted with old liturgical objects being kept at the monastery¹⁰, Georgije Argiri also drew on this tradition¹¹. The fields around icons are decorated with perforated plant ornaments, with flowers and leaves incised with needle. The gilded edge of the fan is adorned with small six-winged seraphim, made of silver and semi-precious stones.

In the same year bishop Nikanor Meletijević commissioned a silver archpriest's staff, which is kept in the treasury of the Cathedral in Sremski Karlovci¹². The staff was made by casting and forging and then chiselled and partially gilded. It consists of five eight-faceted joints, articulated by ball joints. Two entwined snakes are at the top end of the staff. In Krušedol, there had been a similar staff of bishop Meletijević, made of ivory¹³. By all indications it had served as the model for making the silver staff. The workmanship and the fact that in that year Nikanor Meletijević had commissioned Georgije Argiri to make the liturgical fan indicate that this staff is to be attributed to the same master craftsman.

The next known work of Georgije Argiri are the covers of the Gospel book made for the Banat monastery of Vojlovica¹⁴ (Fig. 1). The Gospel was printed in Moscow in 1718 and the cover plates were commissioned by the prior Ignatius a decade later. Facts about this undertaking are engraved in an oval silver medallion riveted to the back of the gospel. At the end of the inscription it is stated that the covers were finished by «Georgi Hrisikos Moshopo(li)tis Vlahos» in December 1728 (Fig. 2). Fixed to the centre of the iron cover there is a round medallion showing the Deisis. Christ is seated on the throne, clad in archpriest robes. Flanking him are standing the Theotokos and John the Baptist, in the corners are triangular plaques with oval medallions. They show the evangelists, with their appertaining attributes. The top medallions depict Mark and Luke and the bottom ones Matthew and John. Georgije Argiri structured the gilt frames of the front cover after the fashion of Russian and Ukrainian Baroque covers¹⁵. Russian and Ukrainian Gospel

10. D. Ruvarac, *Manastir Krušedos obzirom na prava i dužnosti fruškogorskih manastira u XIX veku*, Sremski Karlovci 1918, p. 26.

11. J. Radovanović, «Prilog ikonografiji svetih sremskih despota Brankovića», *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske* 7 (1971) 301-302.

12. Lj. Vujaklija, «Iz inventara sremskokarlovačke Saborne crkve», *Građa za proučavanje spomenika kulture Vojvodine VI-VII* (1976) 308-309, No. 28.

13. L. Mirković, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

14. L. Mirković, «Crkvene starine u srpskim crkvama i manastirima Banata, Rumunije i Mađarske», *Spomenik Srpske akademije nauka, XCIX, Odeljenje društvenih nauka, nova serija* 1 (1950) 1; O. Milanović Jović, «Iz slikarstva i primenjene umetnosti u Banatu», *Građa za proučavanje spomenika kulture Vojvodine VIII-IX* (1978) 138, pl. 82, 83.

15. V. Pucko, «Oklad ruskoj liturgičeskoj knigi XIV-XVII veku», *Zbornik Muzeja primenjene umetnosti u Beogradu* 18 (1974) 26-32.

books with gilded frames can often be found in the churches of the Karlovci Metropolitanate, and have been found as far as south in the monastery of Chilandar¹⁶. Georgije Argiri was certainly very well familiar with them, but he exercises much caution in modelling his work after them. His images and decorative ornaments have been cast with more stylisation and less plasticity than is the case of the covers of Russian Gospel books.

In the church of the Ascension of Christ at Ruma two Gospel covers have been preserved bearing the signature of Georgije Argiri. The first cover, as stated in the inscription, was made for the church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in the Nova Varoš section of Belgrade¹⁷. It is, however, not entirely clear what church is in question. The Cathedral of the Belgrade Metropolitanate at Gornji Grad, which was demolished during the Austro-turkish wars towards the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century and renovated in the period between 1725 and 1728, had been dedicated to the Archangels Michael and Gabriel¹⁸. In Nova Varoš, Donji Grad, there was the church of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, which was being renovated at that time¹⁹. There is every indication that the Gospel was donated to the Cathedral of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, because an oval silver medallion was attached to it, depicting the scene of the Annunciation hammered into it. It was designated in Greek «Evangelismos», while the text engraved on the rim of the medallion is Serbo-Slavic. It shows that this Gospel was donated to the church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Belgrade by Georgije Argiri in April 1734. It was precisely in that year that action was made for completion of the restoration of this church²⁰, which was probably what prompted Georgije Argiri to contribute on his part to that undertaking. The covers of the second Gospel do not indicate either the church for which they were made or the year. The oval medallion depicts the Resurrection of Christ, denoted as «Anastasis», followed by a text in Greek stating that it had been made by «God's servant Georgije, silversmith from Moshopolis»²¹. In view of the fact that the workmanship of the covers of the Gospel books is similar to that of those of the Cathedral Church in Belgrade, it is probable that they originate from the same year, somewhere around 1734.

The last known work featuring the name of Georgije Argiri is the massive silver cover of the Gospel books of the Šišatovac monastery in Fruška Gora²². The Gospels were printed in Moscow in 1735 and the covers were framed in 1742. From the description of

16. J. Radovanović, «Ruska i ukrajinska štampana četvorojevanđelja XVIII veka sa okovima u biblioteci manastira Hilandara», *Zbornik Muzeja primenjene umetnosti u Beogradu* 26-27 (1982-1983) 25-44.

17. O. Milanović Jović, «Darohranilnica iz 1725 u Vaznesenskoj crkvi u Rumi», *Rad vojvođanskih muzeja* 9 (1960) 255, pl. 5.

18. P. Vasić, «Srpski Beograd u doba baroka», *Doba baroka, studije i članci*, Beograd 1971, pp. 175-177; B. Vujović, *Saborna crkva u Beogradu*, Beograd 1996, pp. 24-27.

19. D. Ruvarac, «Hram rođestva sv. Jovana u Novoj Varoši», *Srpski Sion* XIV (1904) 105-107; D. Popović - M. Bogdanović, *Grad a za istoriju Beograda 1717-1739*, Beograd 1958, p. 138; P. Vasić, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

20. R. M. Grujić, «Prilozi za istoriju Srbije u doba austrijske okupacije (1718-1739)», *Spomenik SKA* LII, drugi raz. 44 (1914) 171, 182-183.

21. O. Milanović Jović, *op.cit.*, p. 254.

22. L. Mirković, *Starine*, p. 62, Table LXVIII.

the supervisory commission of metropolitan Pavle Nevadović, that visited Šišatovac in 1753, we learn that the former prior of the monastery, Vasilije, passed away on June 17, 1742 and that according to his last wishes, his legacy was spent to provide gilt cover for the Gospel²³. The cover consists of rectangular plates fixed to the base, and the figural representations are cast or beaten. This technique of covering the Gospels was accepted in the Serbian church over the previous two centuries, and a number of representative examples were kept in the treasuries of the Fruška Gora monasteries. Characteristic examples, with which those who had commissioned the covers and probably the master craftsman were familiar with, are the covers of the Gospel books of the Krušedol monastery from 1656 and the covers of the Hopovo monastery Gospels from 1661²⁴. An identical structure of Gospel covers was also maintained in the Moshopolis silversmiths' shops up to the middle of the 18th century. One of the examples is the cover made by Filip and Argjur Atanasit in 1755²⁵. The central field on the top part of the Gospel from Šišatovac depicts the Resurrection of Christ. Above there is the Crucifixion and beneath it the Entombment. Flanking it on each side are four rectangular fields depicting scenes from the cycle of Christ's passion. The cycle begins in the top left corner with a composition showing the Last Supper and continues on the other side with a representation of Judas's treachery. The last scene in the bottom left corner is the Bearing of the Cross. The Theotokos Platitera is in the central field of the lower cover, flanked by two angels with flowers in their hands. The same type of the Virgin surrounded by angels, represented in a similar way also, appears in the Gospel covers of the Hopovo monastery from 1661²⁶. Beneath the angels are square plaques with engraved scenes of the Annunciation and the Nativity of the Theotokos. At the bottom of the plaque showing the Nativity of the Theotokos is the signature of the master. Between these images there is a rectangular plate with an inscription regarding the overlaying of the Gospel. Above the Virgin there is St. George, represented as a horseman slaying the dragon. At the bottom is St. Stefan Štiljanović, whose relics were kept at Šišatovac. He is depicted in ruler's regalia, with a crown on his head. A cape is draped over his shoulders and he is holding a staff and cross in his hands²⁷. The corner plaques depict the evangelists with their appertaining symbols.

A particular problem in researching the work of Georgije Argiri is the Eucharist paten donated to the monastery of Gomirje by the bishop of Gornji Karlovci Pavle Nenadović, later to be the metropolitan of Karlovci²⁸ (Fig. 3). The paten was made by casting,

23. D. Ruvarac, *Opis srpskih fruškogorskih manastira 1753 godine*, Sremski Karlovci 1905, p. 142; P. Štraser, *op.cit.*, p. 371.

24. B. Radojković, «Srpski okovi jevanđelja XVI i XVII veka», *Zbornik Muzeja primenjene umetnosti u Beogradu* 3-4 (1958) 51-84; B. Radojković, *Srpsko zlatarstvo XVI i XVII veka*, Novi Sad 1966, pp. 134-136.

25. A. Bilbili, «Kapake ungjilli nga Voskopoja dhe vlerat e tyre Artistike», *Munumentet* 1 (1983) 105-111.

26. B. Radojković, *Srpski okovi jevanđelja*, pl. 35.

27. R. Zarić, «Lik Stefana Štiljanovića u srpskoj umetnosti XVII-XVIII veka», *Saopštenja Republičkog zavoda za zaštitu spomenika kulture Srbije* XVII (1985) 78.

28. I. Bah, *Stari srpski zlatari u Hrvatskoj*, Povijesni muzej Hrvatske, Predavanja 16, Zagreb 1969, p. 5; D. Kašić, *Srpski manastiri u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji*, Beograd 1971, p. 87; V. Borčić, *Zbirka umjetnički obrađ enog*

beating and etching. The rim of the disk is slightly elevated. It is supported by a high cylindrical leg. The leg widens at the bottom to form a round foot adorned with bountiful floral ornaments. Evenly distributed on the plate of the disk are three chalices with lids adorned with similar elaborate floral ornaments. A three-pronged candle holder stands next to them. A smaller disk has been placed in the centre, serving for depositing the first bread, around which symbols of the evangelists have been hammered. This type of baroque patens was new and it was accepted in the Karlovci Metropolitanate in the course of the first half of the 18th century. The earlier patens, made during the preceding century, had a wider disk. They were supported by more legs which were considerably shorter. And when patens were made with a single supporting stand, they did not have a widened foot at the bottom²⁹.

At the rim of the disk there is an engraved inscription from which we learn that the paten was made by «Georgi Srebkov» in Novi Sad, on June 29, 1748. In addition to the stylistic analogies, there are also a number of other reasons on the basis of which «Georgi Srebkov» can be identified as Georgije Argiri. Writing his name as «Georgi», abridged from «Georgis», indicates that the master craftsman's mother tongue was Greek. As far as we know, in the middle of the 18th century no other silversmith by that name worked in Novi Sad except Georgije Argiri. It was in this same way that he inscribed his name on the liturgical fan of the monastery of Krušedol and the overlay of the Gospel of the monastery of Vojlovica. The surname «Srbkov» (silver) is the Serbian translation of the surname Argiri (argyriion). The practice of serbianizing Greek names, by translating them or adding Serbian endings to them, was not infrequent at the time. A case in point is the painter Jovan Četirević from Grabovo, who signed himself on his first iconostasis in the village of Molovin as «Jovan Četiri Grabovan», only to add, four years later, on the iconostasis in the village of Orahovica, a «vić» to his surname and become «Jovan Četirević»³⁰. Similarly, Janko Halkozović changed his surname. Initially, he signed his name as Greek, as Janko Halkozo, whereas on the iconostasis of the monastery in Beočin he signed his name as «Janko Halkozović»³¹. Georgije could also have serbianized his name by adding an ending. That is what one of the most eminent Tzintzar families in Osijek did, the founder of which Leontije Argirović died on November 22, 1783³².

Bishop Pavle Nenadović first met Georgije Argiri early in 1748, when he came to Sremski Karlovci on the occasion of the death of the patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović Šakabenta. The paten was finished towards the end of June, and several months later at

metala Srba u Hrvatskoj, Povijesni muzej Hrvatske, Odjel Srba u Hrvatskoj, Zagreb 1971, Cat. No. 19, pl. 6.

29. L. Mirković, *Starine*, Table XXIX, LXII; B. Radojković, *Srpsko zlatarstvo*, pl. 148, 152, 161, 170, 171, 172; V. Borčić, *Zbirka umjetnički*, p. 32, kat. br. 107, pl. 25; M. Šakota, *Studenička riznica*, Beograd 1988, p. 126.

30. M. Jovanović, «Jovan Četirević Grabovan», *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice srpske* 1 (1965) 200.

31. S. Mileusnić, «Crkveno-umetnički predmeti iz riznice fruškogorskih manastira», *Fruškogorski manastiri*, Beograd 1990, p. 247, Cat. No. 35.

32. J. Bosendorfer, «Pravoslavni elemenat kao sekundarni faktor u oblikovanju građanskog staleža u Osijeku», *Osječki zbornik* II-III (1948) 65.

the Synod in Sremski Karlovci, convened on August 27 to elect the new elder of the Karlovci Metropolitanate, Nenadović was appointed bishop of the Arad eparchy³³. It was expected that Nenadović, as one of the closest associates of the deceased patriarch would be elected metropolitan of Karlovci, which indeed happened next year. It is probably for those reasons that he commissioned the paten which he donated to the most eminent monastery of the Gornji Karlovci eparchy. Pavle Nenadović was pro-Austrian oriented and an opponent of the South Balkan tradition. Argiri knew this and it is probably due to this reason that he did not sign his name in Greek on the paten, nor emphasise his Moshopolis origins. In the following decade, when Nenadović was at the helm of the Karlovci Metropolitanate, the official art of the Serbian church in the Hapsburg monarchy was subjected to an ever more blatant suppression of its tradition and of south-Balkan influences. It was precisely at that time that artists originating from the south forbore their signatures in Greek and seldom indicated their origins. They only affixed their signatures the way they used to do, when they worked for Greek and Tzintzar employers.

Georgije Argiri, on the basis of stylistic analogies with the paten of the Gomirje monastery, also attributed the Eucharist plates of the monastery Kovilj, the parish church of the Archdeacon Stefan in Sremska Mitrovica, and the church of St. Nicholas in Novi Sad. Ivan Bah thinks that an icon lamp in the Historical Museum of Croatia is associated with the way of work of the Novi Sad master Georgije who made the paten of the Gomirje monastery³⁴. The icon lamp is inaccessible to me, so that I am in no position to discuss its possible attribution to the opus of Georgije Argiri.

The Eucharist paten of the church of St. Nicholas in Novi Sad dates back to 1750³⁵. Its disk is in the form of a shallow plate, and the date of its inception is inscribed on the rim. It is supported by a cylinder-shaped leg widening at the base into a round foot. Symbols of the evangelists, surrounded by stylised floral ornaments, have been cast, beaten and etched in the upper section of the disk with three cups and a three-pronged candleholder placed between them. The upper section for unleavened bread (prosphora) features the beaten waist image of Christ Immanuel benedictory with his hands raised. There is no name, not even the initials of the master inscribed on the paten. It is, however, almost identical in form with the patens from the monastery of Gomirje. The image of Christ Immanuel has been depicted almost identically as on the liturgical fan of the Krušedol monastery bearing the signature of Georgije Argiri. The identical features are especially in evidence in the fold of the drapes, so that there is no dilemma whatsoever that they are the work of the same master.

The paten of the monastery of Kovilj, dated 1741, is of similar workmanship³⁶ (Fig. 4). The paten of the parish church of the Archdeacon Stefan in Sremska Mitrovica was

33. M. Grbić, *Karlovačko vlašičanstvo, Prilog istoriji Srpske pravoslavne crkve*, v.II, Karlovac 1891, p. 15.

34. I. Bah, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

35. *Op.cit.*, p. 38, pl. 77, 78.

36. O. Milanović Jović, *Iz arhitekture, slikarstva i primenjene umetnosti Bačke*, Novi Sad 1980, p. 38, pl. 79.

made in the same year, as attested to by the inscription at the base of the foot³⁷. At the section reserved for the first prosphora has been beaten the waist image of Christ the Lord. He is blessing with his right hand and holding the Gospel in his left hand.

In the course of the 1730's and 1740's a series of gold articles were made similar in workmanship and style to the works of Georgije Argiri. This similarity is especially conspicuous in those works bearing the imprinted initials of the master «GG VS». They feature on the chalice from 1743 and the Gospel covers of the monastery of Bodjani printed in Moscow in 1730³⁸, the covers of the Gospel book of the monastery of Kovilj from 1739³⁹, and on the chalice of the parish church at Donji Kovilj⁴⁰. The same initials are imprinted on the silver overlay of the cross commissioned for the parish church of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Osjek by Teodor Jovanović in 1742⁴¹. Similar to these works is also the cover of the Gospel book of the church of the Dormition in Sremski Karlovci. In addition to exhibiting a number of similarities with the works of Georgije Argiri, they also feature some differences. There is every indication that it was probably still unidentified silversmith who was developing under the influence of Georgije Argiri. His work, especially the Gospel covers, exhibit stronger Russian influences than do similar works by Georgije Argiri. Characteristic examples of different perceptions are the Gospel book covers made by Georgije Argiri for the Vojlovica monastery and the covers of the Gospel made by the master «GG VS» for the monasteries of Bodjani and Kovilj (Fig. 5). The connection between these two masters, however, is not accidental, and this fact led some authors to assume that the same person was in question⁴². In the year 1734, at the same time when Georgije Argiri was working on the Gospel book covers for the Cathedral in Belgrade, the chalice with initials «GG VS» was made, commissioned for the Resava monastery by the hieromonach Dimitrije⁴³. In view of the fact that this monastery is in Serbia, it is highly unlikely that the chalice was made in Novi Sad. It is much more realistic to assume that at the time the chalice was made, its craftsman was staying in Belgrade, like Georgije Argiri did, and that later he moved to Novi Sad.

The opus of Georgije Argiri, the signed works and those attributed to him on the basis of stylistic analogy, demonstrate that he was one of the most fruitful silversmiths working in the Karlovci Metropolitanate, in the course of the first half of the 18th century. By all indications he was a very renowned craftsman, as his works were mainly commissioned for rich monasteries and parish churches which could afford expensive and representative

37. M. Lesek, «Umetnička delatnost u XVIII i XIX veku», *Sremska Mitrovica*, Sremska Mitrovica 1969, p. 160; O. Milanović Jović, *op.cit.*, p. 38, pl. 80, 81.

38. L. Mirković, I. Zdravković, *Manastir Bođani*, Beograd 1952, p. 73; O. Milanović Jović, *Iz arhitekture...*, p. 36, 40, pl. 70.

39. *Op.cit.*, p. 36, pl. 71.

40. *Op.cit.*, p. 40.

41. V. Borčić, *Zbirka umjetnički*, p. 60, Cat. No. 264.

42. O. Milanović Jović, *Iz arhitekture*, p. 40.

43. P. Momirović, *Manastir Bođani*, Bođani 1980, p. 105.

liturgical objects. Among the dignitaries of the church hierarchy who commissioned works from his workshop were the bishop of Pečuj Nikanor Meletijević and the bishop of Gornji Karlovci Pavle Nenadović, later the metropolitan of Karlovci. Despite his rich opus, only a few reliable biographical facts from the life of Georgije Argiri have been established. On the liturgical fan of the Krušedol monastery, his first known work in the areas of the Karlovci Metropolitanate, he signed himself as «Georgije Argiri, silversmith from Moshopolis». The surname Argiri was not infrequent in the cities of the Karlovci Metropolitanate during the 18th century. It appeared in the forms «Argir», «Argiri», «Ardjir», and even serbianized, «Argirović»⁴⁴. On the cover of the Gospel book of the Vojlovica monastery the silversmith inscribed his name as «Georgi Hrisikos». We learn from the same inscription that he was Tzintzar by nationality, «Vlahos» (Vlach, Walachian) as he himself put it.

The first known works by Georgije Argiri date back to the mid-twenties, suggesting that he was born at the turn of the 18th century. He learned his trade in Moshopolis within his own family. This is indicated by the name Argiri, which was the surname of Greek and Tzintzar silversmith families. Afterwards he moved to the Hapsburg empire, where by the mid-1720's Argiri had already earned a reputation as a master craftsman. We learn from the inscription on the Eucharist paten of the Gomirje monastery that in mid-1748 he lived in Novi Sad, the seat of the eparchy of Bačka and renowned arts and crafts centre. It is probable that before that time he had lived for a while, or at least stayed for a short spell, in Belgrade, which was under Austrian occupation from 1717 to 1739. This is suggested by the fact that he donated gilded Gospel covers to the Cathedral in Belgrade. The activity of Georgije Argiri ceased around the middle of the eighteenth century but it seems that he died much later, in a ripe old age. Towards the end of his life he donated to the monastery of Šišatovac a belt bought in Vienna in 1771⁴⁵. A decade later a certain Stefan Ardjir was registered as a pupil of the Greek school in Novi Sad, but we have no idea whether he was related to Georgije Argiri⁴⁶.

The liturgical objects of the type commissioned from Georgije Argiri were being made for centuries in Orthodox churches. Their use did not change so that their form and the iconographic decoration programme were largely traditional. During the three decades, when Argiri worked in the Karlovci Metropolitanate, between 1724 and 1750, Serbian art was undergoing complex transformations with tradition being amalgamated with the new Baroque perceptions. Georgije Argiri, like the majority of the artists who came from the South Balkan hinterland, accepted the new concepts with measure and caution. In crafting the liturgical fan for the Krušedol monastery and the covers of the Gospel book for the Šišatovac monastery he drew on tradition. The covers of the Gospel book of the Vojlovica monastery, as well as the patens, have a form accepted only in the Baroque.

44. D. J. Popović, *O cincarina*, p. 319.

45. S. Mileusnić, «Crkveno-umetnički predmeti manastira Šišatovca», *Manastir Šišatovac*, Zbornik radova, Beograd 1989, p. 216.

46. D. J. Popović, *op.cit.*, p. 319.

He did not introduce much novelty in the types of Christ, the Holy Virgin and the saints, and in the iconography of certain compositions. Still there is some. The covers of the Gospel book from the Šišatovac monastery features the cycle of Christ's passion. This cycle was not shown on Serbian covers of the Gospel book in previous times. In other Orthodox communities, however, it appeared in the 17th century. In the Walachian Principality, with which the Karlovci Metropolitanate maintained close artistic ties, the cycle of Christ's passion was often presented on the covers of Gospel books already in the last decade of the 17th century⁴⁷. The cover of the Gospel book from the monastery of Šišatovac also features, in the centre of the cycle of Christ's passion, the Resurrection scene. Christ is shown above the tomb, but also at the entrance to Hades holding Adam and Eve by the hand. The heads of the other righteous are showed from behind. Obviously, the master is combining two iconographic types, Christ's Resurrection from the tomb and Descent into the Hades⁴⁸. The scene of the Annunciation in the covers of the Gospel book which Argiri presented to the church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Belgrade was done after the fashion of West European Baroque conceptions. The decorative elements, like floral wreaths, are much less stylised. They are crafted in a similar fashion as the bordures of Hristofor Džefarović's graphic leaves.

Georgije Argiri, viewed within the broader framework of the silversmith trade in the Karlovci Metropolitanate in the 18th century, belongs to the group of master craftsmen with a traditional orientation. The majority of Greek and Tzintzar silversmiths active in these areas in the first half of the 18th century belong to this group. Only a few, the most skilful ones, more readily espoused central European Baroque concepts.

47. C. Nicolescu, *Argintaria laica si religiosa in tarile Romane (sec. XIV-XIX)*, Bucuresti 1968, pp. 305, 306, 308, 310, 313, 319, Cat. No. 351, 352, 356, 357, 358, 361.

48. P. Hetherington, *The «Painter's Manual» of Dionisius of Fourna*, London 1974, p. 39.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Miroslav Timotijević

Ο ΜΟΣΧΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ ΑΡΓΥΡΟΧΟΟΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΑΡΓΥΡΗΣ

Από τις αρχές του 18ου αιώνα, η σερβική τέχνη επρόκειτο να δεχτεί όλο και πιο έντονα τις δυτικοευρωπαϊκές επιρροές. Το πνεύμα της βυζαντινής τέχνης και παράδοσης δεν εγκατέλειψε ποτέ τη Σερβία, ενώ ακόμη και την εποχή του Μπαρόκ σημαντική ήταν η ελληνική επιρροή στους τομείς της αρχιτεκτονικής, της ζωγραφικής, της χαρακτικής και των διακοσμητικών τεχνών. Από τις αρχές ακόμη του 18ου αιώνα, η Μοσχόπολις με τα φημισμένα εργαστήριά της συνέβαλε ουσιαστικά στην ανάπτυξη της σερβικής διακοσμητικής τέχνης. Οι Μοσχοπολίτες αργυροχόοι θεωρούνταν εξάιρετοι καλλιτέχνες για τη σερβική ορθόδοξη εκκλησία εντός της επικράτειας της μοναρχίας των Αψβούργων και ένας εξ αυτών ήταν και ο «Γεώργιος Αργύρης, ο αργυροχόος από τη Μοσχόπολη». Η υπογραφή του υπάρχει σε λειτουργικό ριπίδιο από το μοναστήρι του Krušedol, σε εξώφυλλα βιβλίων στον Καθεδρικό Ναό του Βελιγραδίου και στα μοναστήρια Šišatonac και Vojlovica. Ο Georgije Melentijević παρήγγειλε την πρώτη επώνυμη δουλειά του Αργύρη για το μοναστήρι Krušedol το 1724, ενώ ο Pavle Nenadović την τελευταία επώνυμη δουλειά του για το μοναστήρι Gomirje το 1748.



Fig. 1. Georgije Argiri, Covers of Gospel Book, 1728, Vojlovica monastery.



Fig. 2. Medallion with inscription on the back of Gospel Book.



Fig. 3. Georgije Srebkov (Argiri), Eucharist paten, 1748, Gomirje monastery.



Fig. 4. Georgije Argiri (?), Eucharist paten, 1741, Kovilj monastery.



Fig. 5. Goldsmith "GG VS", Cover of Gospel Book, 1739, Kovilj monastery.